

# ANGORAS MAKE TRIP TO MOUNT NICOLAI

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A good many of the citizens of Astoria have perhaps never heard of the existence of a mountain by that name. Neither is it well known to the county at large. The reason of this is, that it is not one of the major mountains of the west and can be classed only as a mountain of the second magnitude of the Coast range. It lies in the northwestern part of the State of Oregon and twenty-four miles in a straight line east from Astoria, and about five miles back of Bradley Park.

Fourteen members of the Angora Hiking Club of Astoria, Oregon, assembled at the Spokane, Portland and Seattle Stage Depot at the foot of Eleventh Street at ten minutes to seven, a. m. Sunday, February 15th, 1925, ready to take the regular stage leaving at that time up the famous scenic Columbia River Highway.

We secured return tickets to Westport, a little sawmill town and seaport up the Columbia river, for which we were asked one dollar each, round trip. A very courteous and good-looking chauffeur soon had us all comfortably seated in the luxuriously furnished and elegantly looking observation coaches of the famous S. P. and S. Stage line. These coaches deserve special mention as the latest effort in the style of stage coach builders craft. They are good-looking, speedy, low hung, and safe. It is the first instance of a Railroad Company, besides operating its regular Railroad lines, going into Gasoline Stage Coaching business over regular state and county highways.

Away we went, swift and easy-riding toward the eastern part of Astoria. At the corner of Bond and forty-fifth street we picked up one more member, Harold Johnson. This made, with Myrtle Trogan, Ami Lagus, Vivian Jackson, Mrs. E. Graniund, Walter Stokes, Historian Aug. Hildebrand, Peggy Thomason, Axel Ramvick, Agnes Carlson, Esther Juntti, Irma Kinney, Francis Wedekind, Rear Guide Chas. Johnson and Chief Guide John Berry, fifteen in all.

The weather was not any too promising, however, a high barometer had assured us of fair expectations. The grey fog clouds covered the Columbia River near the Washington shore. The sky was over-cast. It was as yet dark. While rounding the neck of Tongue Point it gradually became lighter and we were soon rolling along at good speed toward a brighter sky. The broad Columbia with its low tide lands and islands, has a fascination, especially in the morning with the sun coming over the

Washington mountains toward the northwest, and here and there water fowl winging low over the misty waters---or, a sea gull or two higher up in the air---or a flock of black crows flying, or perching and cawing in the tree tops.

At Wolf Point, this side of Burnside Village, this picture unfolds itself again with an assembling log boom just in front of the tideland in the fore-ground. After this, the road goes farther inland; farms and homesteads are passed. Later we passed through a logged off and burned over section of the county, where blackened tree stumps are mute reminders of the glories of the past. They also remind that "westward the Empire is taking its course." Sometime in the future the black stumps will give way to farms and houses--There is room our way--and for millions more there is space in the west.

We were now traveling through green timber looping the horse shoe loop, winding up the heights of Bradley Park. Here we came into view of the Columbia River again. Unfortunately fog obstructed this view. This spoiled somewhat our expectations, but it did not dampen our spirits.

A lively bunch disembarked. The caretaker of Bradley Park was asked as to the location of any trail leading up to Mount Nicolai. This gentleman assured us that he never heard of one and did not know.

However, the Chief Guide led the bunch up, counted numbers---fifteen were found as correct. We headed toward the west, into the unknown.

Through second growth timber, small alders, salmonberry brush and other brush we traveled, and crawled the best we could, going continually up, up and up---never once down.

Chas. Johnson, the rear Guide, had an altitude barometer along. An altitude barometer is an instrument that acts through the pressure of air on a dial that registers the number of feet on an ascent. This instrument was of the size and shape of a large pocket watch. The registering was done by a pointer the same as the hands of a watch. This instrument can also be set at any registering altitude, and can be depended on as reasonably correct. The only factor to be taken into consideration is the fact, that the weather conditions may change during the use. However, this can be checked back again after arrival at sea level, by compar-



ing the record with a registering barometer left at such sea level, or in fact at any level from place of departure. The recorded altitude at Bradley Park was 800 feet. At about a registering altitude, according to the barometer, of 1000 feet, we came to an open part of the ridge, where the ridge went abruptly down. This was a look-out place, but unfortunately the fog was as yet enveloping the whole mountain and woods. We did not have an out-look, but only a look down. The rest we had to leave to imagination. But this imagination stirred up quite a picture.

If ever you travel from Portland to Astoria on a steamboat on the Columbia, or on the S. P. and S. Railroad, or on the famous Columbia River Highway, and you are near the upper end of Puget Island, or on Railroad near Westport, or on the Highway east of and below the famous Wilby loops, you will see above you to the south, away up, a steep mountain side of sand stone and basalt stone formation. Well we were on top of this ridge looking down.

If you keep on this ridge continually up to the highest point, you will eventually fetch up at the top of Mount Nicolai.

Well, we kept on going and soon struck a place where logging had been in progress last summer.

A logging location is a dismal looking place. To see the monarchs of the forest laying prostrate is a sad sight to any lover of nature, but to see the younger generation of trees being ruined, through the process of taking the matured trees out of the forest, is the crime of our present method of logging. It is a slaughter of the innocents.

For those who are not acquainted with the present logging methods, let it be explained; In the earlier times hand logging was the method. In this method the trees near the water were hewn and sawed down and then cut into logs, and these were, with the aid of peavies (a sort of a crowbar with a hook on the end) and other levers rolled into the water. The next stage of improvement was that the logs were jacked with jack screws, and some with windlasses, and either rolled or skidded toward the water, from whence they were transported to the mill. The distances from the water gradually increased, and ox teams were necessary to haul the logs over skidways to water. This was an age on itself that produced its ox drivers and goad sticks and profanity. It seemed that the louder and coarser the individual acted, the better ox puncher he made. It seemed that vulgarity was in demand to produce results from the oxen as well as the men. These yoked oxen, in teams of six to ten, traveled miles over well made skid roads, or rather badly made roads, as between the skids it was a matter of mud, mud and again mud. Summer and fall were the only time that was suitable for logging.

Later horses were used, but only for a short time. The horses were

quicker than oxen, and were a decided improvement.

Next in order and in line of improvement, was the donkey engine. At first the ordinary hoisting donkey engines were used, the cable being used to haul logs out of the woods in windless style. This style of engine was gradually enlarged--used in relays for miles. It was really the commencement of our present style of logging. Profanity was dropped as a necessary requisite to good logging, as the steam engine did not have any sense of hearing. To spur the effort in that direction was wasted. Labor agitators did much to better the conditions of the laboring men, loggers, so that you will find the present day loggers a gentlemanly lot compared with the early day ones. The system of flushing streams to float the logs to tide water, or haul the logs on trains to tide water, remains more or less the same as of old, excepting that the logging trains evolved themselves from narrow gauge to standard gauge and size. Everything now goes for size--it takes weight to handle the giants of the forest.

Coming back to the steam logging engine; from a tiny donkey engine of say ten to twelve horsepower, they are using now engines of two hundred horsepower, that means some size. From a 3-4 inch diameter steel cable used at first, it has evolved into 2 to 2 1-2 inch cable with a return cable of at least 1 inch in diameter.

I am telling you about all this so you may understand later what I am telling you.

In the successive improvements in the logging equipment, the second growth and young aftergrowth was successively more and more disregarded. It was ruthlessly destroyed to a greater degree as the mode of taking the trees out of the woods improved.

Anything, however, can be improved to the degree of abuse.

The latest in the style of logging is by the high lead, which means, that the trees, after being sawed into log lengths, are hauled by the aid of steam donkeys and steel cable to a central point via a high central standing tree trunk, to be loaded there onto logging train cars. In doing this every living tree and bush, that is, those that are too small to be taken along to the mill, are simply torn out of existence. All green plants are prostrated and ruined.

In the face of a clamor about reforestation, it seems a tragedy. Yet such is the greed for a cheaper method, for more immediate profits, that the thought of a heritage to the next generation is being lost sight of entirely. Where it would only take a decade in the former styles of logging to produce again a stand of loggable trees, under the present abuse, it will take a hundred years and perhaps not then. Surely that man who invented the present abusive system of logging deserves of no considera-



tion. His monument is a desolate country. However, I may be somewhat too severe in my censure. If I do not remember correctly, the high lead logging was first suggested as desirable where steep canyons are to be crossed, or on very steep mountain sides, and in such places it is highly desirable and efficient. However it is like many other new innovations and institutions, which evolve themselves to such a state of efficiency, that they are being abused in the use. In other world, the abuse of the system hurts---not the system itself.

Coming back to our hike; we encountered a section of this desolate country, and presently came to the center of a high logging lead and a railroad right of way.

No logging was going on---the camp had shut down for the winter. The engines were all covered up in parts to protect them against the elements.

Crossing the railroad we travel over more prostrate trees and remnants of trees. The country at this location was in the shape of a moderately even elevated plateau, slanting up toward the south. We were as yet traveling in fog clouds with a drop of rain here and there.

We soon came to another railroad, which was leading in a southerly direction---up. On this railroad we traveled, tie to tie, and indefinitely repeated.

We had now travelled from Bradley Park about three miles through forest, underbrush, and logged over land. After a good mile or two of tie travel, the railroad came to an abrupt drop of the mountain and turned slightly to the southwest, to avoid the drop. We were now under and above the cliffs of the same ridge that we travelled on, excepting in a much higher altitude---an altitude of about 1600 feet.

We observed the formation of the cliff; it was a sort of basaltic rock formation, towering a good many hundred feet up. Farther along we could notice another layer of porous volcanic rock laying in a sheet several feet thick under the basalt. Between these two layers there was a streak of brown, yellow and greenish material, in inches of thickness, that reminded of volcanic ash. And, behold as we travelled up, underneath all, was a layer of hard sand or very soft sand stone, the depth of which must be considerably, we could not indicate anything under this sand. The whole formation, clay and soil on top, basalt rock, volcanic ash, volcanic porous rock, and sand underneath, in the order given, gave impressions that the order of things were reversed---that is, the sand should have been on top, etc.

No doubt the sand was at one time on the surface and was exceedingly overflowed with volcanic lava which formed into rocks, and again, the convulsions of the earth pushed high up to form mountains---those places that were perhaps

sea or lake shore or even sea bottom before.

It is interesting to take notice of all this. I often wished I was a geologist to be able to read the signs of the rocks. However, if I did know more about rocks I might be tempted to look for gold instead of dreaming, as I do now, about how to scale mountains---or to think about parks. The creator perhaps put me in the right place---who knows?

The railroad bed was engineered in a most difficult and daring place, right under rock cliffs, and above an abrupt drop of the mountain. Loose rocks and fallen trees from the cliffs covered the railroad. The last winter's storms, and alternative action of frost and sunshine had sent them down the mountain side. Below was an almost perpendicular mountain side that was bolstered up here and there with logs, laid lengthwise, so as to hold the ties and rails. At one place the ground, all formed of loose rocks and boulders, had given away, leaving ties and rails hanging in the air.

This formation was about the same all the rest of the way up the mountain. At almost the top the road bed cut through a sand ridge, like a sand dune on the seashore. The sand had washed down the cut and covered part of the road bed and rails. When I said the top of the mountain, I meant to say the uppermost part reached by railroad. The highest part was as yet to the right from this railroad, at an additional height of about 500 feet.

The altitude meter registered 1700 feet when we struck the first snow. It was lying in patches and was not of any great quantity. From here the snow was in evidence the rest of the way up. The altitude of the sand dune was about 1850 feet. Just past this place we stopped for lunch on the southern slope of the peak. Fire was soon started and while some prepared the coffee, others explored the ridges to the left overlooking the Columbia near Wauna and Westport.

The view was not very good. Intervening clouds interfered. Enough however was seen to give an idea of height and possible vision in good weather.

We all lunched. At times it threatened to rain and it did rain some. However we were more or less protected from the elements so did not mind it. At times the clouds would lift somewhat and give us a view to the southwest. Part of this was high hills, some of which were devoid of trees, and on some the forest had not been cut down. Snow in patches was everywhere.

Soon after lunch we prepared to scale the very top. Over snow and over and around prostrate and charred trees we steadily went up a moderately steep incline of about the distance from the lower part of Astoria to the top of Coxcomb hill. The climbing was in no



wise strenuous. The snow and weather helped to keep every one cool. We were traveling in clouds. In time we arrived on top. The top is just a round oval ridge. To the west was as yet green timber which obstructed our view in that direction. To the North, East and South the mountain was comparatively bare of trees, only a few standing, left over trees and stumps obstructed the view. Clouds were all around us. However we were lucky; just at this moment, the north and eastern part of the hemisphere cleared enough to give us a glimpse of Tongue Point, the lower river with its settlements, and the river farther up. Just then a cloud came up from the south. This obstructed the view in this direction. This cloud presently covered the whole top of the mountain, leaving us in darkness again.

While descending, this cloud blew over revealing the view to the south. This was that part of the Columbia river that lies above Westport as far as Longview and further. Also the distant Washington mountains came in view.

While the visibility could only be counted as 50 per cent on this trip enough was seen to reveal to us that Mount Nicolai was the center of a hair circle formed by the Columbia river, and that, so far as river scenery was concerned, it beats any location on this whole river.

The writer has viewed the Columbia from North head, Coxcomb hill, Bradley Park, Crown Point Benson Park, but this Mt. Nicolai view is the best of them all.

It is remarkable the different diversified scenery we have in the northwest part of Oregon.

The Tillamook head trail must be classed as ocean scenery. North Head gives the best view of the Mouth of the Columbia. Rock pinnacled Sugarloaf Mountain gives one an idea of vast green untouched forests. Onion Peak is rough and strenuous, something that taxes endurance and skill. Nicolai Mountain gives an enchanting river view with snow capped cascade mountains in the distance, and Saddle Mountain gives you a taste of all these pleasures or labors combined.

Coming back to the Mt. Nicolai trip--Assembling at our luncheon place, we soon lined up for the return trip. The altitude meter had showed at the very top, 2375 feet, and was registering downward now. We wended our way down the railroad right of way and kept on this, going past the cliffs mentioned before and down the plateau. From this plateau we beheld at times pleasing panoramic pictures of the lower river. By now the weather was clearing. We traveled in easy gait toward the Northwest, descending gradually. At a sharp turn and loop of the road, where it leads into the Parson Creek ravine, we made a short cut through this ravine and saved quite a distance traveling.

Down this creek gulch, still traveling on the railroad about a good mile, we arrived at the horse shoe loop of the Columbia River Highway. We had hiked this day about five miles up and seven miles down. It can be classed as easy traveling compared with other mountains. Being winter, the lack of leaves on the underbrush in the first stage of our journey, helped some in traveling and view.

We camped under and near this Horse Shoe loop bridge, started a fire to prepare coffee, and had lunch beside a pleasant mountain stream. It was now about 5.00 o'clock P. M. While thus conversing among ourselves and enjoying nature, ala Hobo style, alongside a brook, a railroad and under a bridge, a man and a boy were seen coming up the railroad grade. When they were near enough the man informed us that we were trespassing, and asked us to leave. When asked how soon, he said: "Instantly." He informed us that he was the watchman and that he did not fear so much the starting of fires, etc., as that he was there to see that nothing was stolen out of the logging camps.

This individual had perhaps never heard of any Hiking Club taking trips--he perhaps visioned Gipsy Bands with women and children, plundering the roadsides. No doubt we perhaps looked like them. Our knapsacks also perhaps looked suspicious to him as possible receptacles of car wheels, logging cables and such like. He even said something about the Sheriff while we kept on munching our sandwiches and sipping our coffee. Visions of Sheriff Slusher and his Deputies greeting us with "Hello boys and girls, glad to see you--well, what kind of a view did you have on top of the Mountain?" came to our mind. The watchman did not seem to make an impression--he left us. We finished our lunch, packed our belongings and travelled up the bank to the highway.

We timed ourselves wonderfully--or it may be, that the S. P. and S. busses are always on time. Along in a fleeting gait came our bus--the same stage that took us up in the morning, and the same courteous smiling chauffeur greeted us.

In just a few seconds or minutes, and we were comfortably seated, gliding along over a smooth road bed toward Astoria, a distance of about 18 miles at about a 25 mile gait. The total cost of bus transportation was \$1.00 each, for coffee, sugar and cream each 10c, a total of One Hundred and Ten Cents for a trip that many would say that many dollars for--if only a cable-car or a balloon would take them up.